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Policy issues

**Chemicals and waste management: implementation of
decision 27/12**

**Outcome of the country-led consultative process on enhancing cooperation
and coordination within the chemicals and wastes cluster: strengthening the
sound management of chemicals and waste in the long term**

Report of the Executive Director

1. At its twenty-sixth session the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme adopted decision 26/12, on enhancing cooperation and coordination within the chemicals and wastes cluster. In that decision the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to facilitate and support an inclusive, country-driven, consultative process on the challenges to and options for further enhancing cooperation and coordination in the chemicals and wastes cluster in the long term. In its decision SS.XII/5, on enhancing cooperation and coordination within the chemicals and wastes cluster, the Governing Council reiterated its request to the Executive Director and in its decision 27/12, on chemicals and waste management, it further requested the Executive Director to present a report on the outcome of the consultative process to the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme at its first session, in June 2014.
2. The consultative process has been driven by countries in recognition that progress in the sound management of chemicals and waste has not been sufficient globally and that continued focus on the sound management of chemicals and waste in the long term is required.
3. The first meeting in the country-led consultative process took place in Pretoria on 19 and 20-November 2013. The second meeting in the consultative process took place in Glen Cove, United States of America, from 25 to 27 February 2014. Both meetings were attended by representatives of Governments, intergovernmental organizations, United Nations bodies and secretariats, civil society organizations and industry.
4. The outcome document of the consultative process has been submitted to the Executive Director and, pursuant to decision 27/12, is set out in the annex to the present report as his report to the Environment Assembly at its first session. The outcome document is presented as agreed upon by the participants in the country-led consultative process, without formal editing.

* UNEP/EA.1/L.

Annex

Strengthening the sound management of chemicals and wastes in the long term^a

A. Introduction

1. Chemicals are inextricably linked to our lives; they are used or produced in almost every industry and social sector, including health, energy, transport, agriculture, construction, textile, mining and consumer products. Chemicals contribute significantly to the well-being of society and are essential for sustainable development and for meeting the challenges of the future. However, they can pose a threat to human health, the environment and sustainable development if not managed in a sound manner throughout their life cycle, including at the waste stage.
2. The global production and use of and trade in chemicals, in addition to the generation of and trade in wastes, are increasing, with growth patterns placing an increasing burden on developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in particular the least developed countries and small island developing States, and presenting them with special difficulties in meeting this challenge.
3. The need to continue to take concerted action for the sound management of chemicals and wastes is accentuated by a lack of management capacity in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, dependency on pesticides in agriculture, exposure of workers and communities to harmful chemicals and wastes and concern about the long-term effects of chemicals and wastes on both human health and the environment and, therefore, sustainable development. The significant burden of disease attributable to exposure to hazardous chemicals and wastes is a cause for concern. The poorest populations and vulnerable groups are often the most affected.
4. In Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002, Governments agreed to aim to achieve that, by 2020, chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. That goal was adopted by multiple stakeholders at the first session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. The 2020 target was further recognized in the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", and was extended to cover hazardous wastes. Strengthened sound management of chemicals and wastes in the long term is an essential cross-cutting issue for sustainable development because there are benefits for the environment, health, poverty eradication, the economy and societies in general.
5. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Governments commended the increased coordination and cooperation among the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and encouraged continued coordination and cooperation among them.
6. Dedicated resources for the sound management of chemicals and wastes have expanded, including through the Global Environment Facility focal area on chemicals and wastes, which now has a wider scope, but further resources are needed to respond to the multiple challenges.

B. Vision

7. To achieve the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and of hazardous wastes in ways that lead to the prevention or minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment, as an essential contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development.

^a The present document is the outcome of the country-led consultative process on the challenges to and options for further enhancing cooperation and coordination within the chemicals and wastes cluster in the long term, as set out in decision 26/12 of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The document is being submitted to the Executive Director of UNEP on 27 February 2014 for inclusion in his report to the United Nations Environment Assembly in June 2014. The document provides a summary of some of the views expressed by participants during the process. The views are neither negotiated nor agreed, nor intended to preempt or prejudice decisions in other processes in the chemicals and wastes cluster.

C. Long-term policy elements

1. Fundamental elements for achieving the vision

8. The strengthened sound management of chemicals and wastes in the long term is essential for sustainable development and should be embedded in the sustainable development agenda.
9. The sound management of chemicals and wastes should be mainstreamed into local, national, regional and international policies and strategies, including sectoral, financial, legal and capacity-building policies, as well as international financing mechanisms and institutions.
10. There is a need to increase the political priority and commitment to the sound management of chemicals and wastes at the local, national, regional and global levels, recognizing that a number of processes present opportunities to draw attention to these important issues, including those relating to the sustainable development goals and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.
11. Achievement of the vision involves an effective, efficient, coherent and coordinated response to challenges in the sound management of chemicals and wastes at the national, regional and global levels.
12. The need to prevent or minimize the significant adverse effects from chemicals and hazardous wastes on human health and the environment will continue to provide a strong basis for sound chemicals and waste management beyond 2020 and could be accompanied by supplementary targets and indicators, within a defined time frame.
13. The sound management of chemicals and wastes is the shared responsibility of all stakeholders, including Governments, industry and others.

2. Basic elements to be addressed

14. A fundamental element for the sound management of chemicals and wastes is the need to develop, implement and enforce basic national legislative and policy frameworks, including designating the responsibilities of industry and the wider business community, and to have the necessary national institutional capacity.
15. Industry has a special responsibility, as designer, producer and user of chemicals and products, and should apply sustainable chemistry, recognizing the ongoing efforts being undertaken in this regard.
16. The effective and efficient implementation of existing chemicals and waste-related obligations under multilateral environmental agreements and actions to implement voluntary frameworks, building on experiences and successes, is essential.
17. Improved access to and generation and sharing of relevant data and understandable information throughout the supply chain are necessary for more informed decision-making and political and public awareness.
18. The sound management of chemicals and wastes includes promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns, including applying a life-cycle approach, and the consideration of waste as a resource.
19. New and emerging issues and challenges of global concern should be identified scientifically through an efficient, multi-stakeholder and inclusive process and should be adequately and effectively addressed. Responding to those issues and challenges requires sufficient capacity at the national, regional and global levels.

3. Reinforcing measures

20. In identifying options to enhance the management of chemicals and wastes in the long term, there is a need to first take stock and evaluate progress in achieving the 2020 goal, taking into account the relevant evaluations in the chemicals and wastes cluster.
21. The sound management of chemicals and wastes should respond specifically to the needs and challenges of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
22. The multidimensional aspects of the sound management of chemicals and wastes provide an opportunity for enhanced cooperation and coordination at the national, regional and global levels, acknowledging the work undertaken to enhance synergies among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.

23. Efforts to promote the sound management of chemicals and wastes will require collaborative multisectoral participation, in particular by broadening the participation of sectors that have not traditionally been involved. Such collaboration should address the strong interlinkages with sectors such as health, education, labour, mining, the environment, agriculture, water and industry.
24. The sound management of chemicals and wastes also requires multi-stakeholder involvement, including from industry and civil society, as well as the research and scientific community.
25. At the global and regional levels, the sound management of chemicals and wastes would benefit from enhanced cooperation and coordination among the organizations participating in the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals^b and other relevant intergovernmental organizations, inter alia, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, and with conventions within and outside the chemicals and wastes cluster.
26. At the national level, the effective sound management of chemicals and wastes requires cooperation among all relevant ministries, such as between agriculture and environment ministries with regard to pesticide regulations.
27. Future efforts to manage chemicals and wastes throughout their life cycle will depend on and benefit from enhanced scientific and technical cooperation and knowledge, building on, inter alia, the *Global Chemicals Outlook* report and its recommendations, the future global waste management outlook report and other relevant sources of information. Furthermore, existing and future scientific data could foster consideration of common objectives for the protection of health and the environment as a basis for future policies.
28. Solutions to minimize the adverse effects of chemicals and wastes have been achieved through existing practices involving the sound management of chemicals and wastes in several countries, which have the potential to be replicated, including by building the capacity of countries to implement those solutions.
29. An integrated approach to financing the sound management of chemicals and wastes, including through mainstreaming in national budgets and development assistance plans, industry involvement and dedicated external financing, is crucial to mobilizing financial resources in the long term.
30. Sustainable, predictable, adequate and accessible long-term funding at all levels, in addition to timely and appropriate technical assistance for activities in support of the sound management of chemicals and wastes, is a key element, in particular in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.
31. Further efforts to elaborate the long-term vision, especially in relation to waste, should be based on full multi-stakeholder involvement, awareness-raising for the public and political leaders and progress in achieving the 2020 goal.

^b Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, International Labour Organization, Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, United Nations Development Programme, UNEP, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, United Nations Institute for Training and Research, World Bank and World Health Organization.

